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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**MADAGASCAR**

# SUCCESS STORY

## Slashing “Slash-and-Burn” Agriculture

**Using other techniques preserves environment and raises income levels**



The head of the Koloharena Association, a local farmers' association near Ranomafana National Park, shows a landscape where they display techniques such as using the grass species *tephrosia* to protect and to fertilize the soil alongside coffee trees. Such methods to intensify agricultural production reduce the incentive to expand through slash-and-burn farming.

***An increased number of households are adopting other agricultural practices as alternatives to slash-and-burn, a change that has produced an average income increase of 20 percent.***

Every year, one-third of Madagascar's land mass is set alight, threatening the rich biodiversity of the forests. These fires result from *tavy*, the traditional slash-and-burn technique used to clear brush and forest for crop production.

Increasing constraints in land availability and productivity compel farmers to clear new farmland along the forest fringe. This unsustainable farming system, which causes degradation and erosion of the landscape, leads to a vicious circle of deepening poverty and shrinking forest area. However, for poor, subsistence farmers, the ramifications of *tavy* boil down to one result: providing food for their families.

USAID is educating local communities about the dangers of slash-and-burn farming. A massive communication campaign was held to encourage rural areas to stop slash-and-burn agriculture. Through training centers, farmer-to-farmer approaches and support to local farming associations, rural communities learn the connections between their livelihood and a healthy forest ecosystem.

Since rural communities hold the key to stopping *tavy*, USAID aims to provide alternatives for rural farmers. Sustainable techniques like agricultural diversification and intensification increase crop yield and food security, creating permanent farming areas. By enabling farmers to provide food for their families, the USAID-sponsored local intervention programs can have a substantial impact upon the rate of *tavy*.

Significant progress has been made in advancing alternative agricultural practices to *tavy*. An increased number of households are adopting two or more alternative practices, a change that has produced an average income increase of 20 percent. This compelling evidence persuades rural farmers to forgo *tavy* in favor of more efficient and profitable farming systems.

Telling Our Story  
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